

**Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services**  
**CHILD WELFARE SERVICES DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN**

**September 30, 2007**

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In September 2006, Congress passed the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Public Law (PL) 109-288). PL 109-288 amended Part B of Title IV of the Social Security Act to reauthorize the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program. Among other changes, PL 109-288 established requirements for states on disaster planning in child welfare under Section 6 (a) (16). Accordingly, counties are requested to address the following program area in developing local disaster readiness plans:

<b>CWS Disaster Response Criteria A:</b>	<b>Identify, locate and continue availability of services for children under State care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster:</b>
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**1.00 Essential Function:**

Identification and location process of children who may be displaced.

**1.01 Process Description:**

Identifying minors may present a challenge in the following areas:

- Due to age of child and their inability to communicate effectively.
- Language barriers and appropriate interpreters are not immediately available.
- Injuries that may render the injured incapable of self-identification regardless of age and absent of proper identification.

**1.02 Action Plan:**

- A. Create database of children identity information consisting of pictures and/or general descriptions to be disseminated throughout the affected area, shelters, and utilized the assistance of the media (i.e. radio, television) in an effort to locate and reunite children with parents and or caregivers.
- B. Utilize the established NIMS typing tool list of translators to assist in the communication process when and where applicable.
- C. All attempts will be made by officials to maintain evacuated individuals in a safe area as close as possible to the evacuated areas. DCFS will continue to work closely with all emergency entities to determine shelter locations of all displaced children because of the Event.

## **2.00 Essential Function:**

Communication process with childcare providers

### **2.01 Process Description:**

The Department maintains a comprehensive database of information on all childcare providers that consist of telephone numbers, address and name and number of children under care. When and if needed this information can be extracted and provided to Children's Social Workers (CSW) or other designated staff to assist in reuniting displaced child(ren) with care providers.

## **3.00 Essential Function:**

Identification of evacuation procedures – Event (disaster) is known in advance

- Identification and location process of children who may be displaced.
- Communication process with childcare providers.
- Identification of evacuation procedures-Event known in advance.
- Identification of evacuation procedures-Event not known in advance.
- Identification of shelters.
- Parental notification procedures.
- Alternative processes for providing continued services.
- Orientation and ongoing training.

### **3.01 Process Description:**

In the event of an evacuation -due to pre-warning and/or known Event- all evacuation procedures will be under the control of local, State or federal entities. When time permits, the Department will make every attempt to identify all children and caregivers in affected areas. If possible, vital information will be retrieved in advanced as to the identification of children and caregivers living in the affected areas. All appropriate steps will be taken to track the displaced parties to area shelters by continued collaboration with the National Red Cross, local, State and federal officials.

Establish a process to incorporate cell phone information of providers into database in order to maintain communication when and where possible.

Maintain locations of all shelters within the services area of DCFS and work closely with lead department and the Red Cross to maintain an accurate and updated list.

When an evacuation is known in advance of an Event, DCFS will work diligently to extract vital information -from our database - on all children and caregivers under the auspices of the Department located in the affected areas. DCFS will work closely with lead departments, Red Cross, local, State and federal officials to obtain the location of evacuees and take all steps to ensure the identity, safety and re-unitification of children and caregivers.

DCFS will continue to maintain a current listing and location of all existing shelters within the service areas. If new and additional shelters are established, DCFS' Office of Emergency Management (OEM) will work closely with all entities to obtain and maintain shelter information.

DCFS' CSWs and volunteers will utilize all means of available communication to notify parents/caregivers in the event of parent/guardian/child separation due to event. Other communication can consist of US Mail, Internet, telephone (landline or cell phone), courier and or other means that may be available due to emergency limitations.

All necessary and alternative services will be utilized to provide continued services to children under care and those that may come under DCFS' care due to an Event. The alternative services may include shelter care supervision, providing minor children direct care, assist lead department in identification, and distribution of special clothing and other financial needs to victims.

DCFS' OEM will continue its training on disaster preparedness to staff on a volunteer basis. OEM will continue to provide staff with information on how to further their information needs and emergency procedures by making available specific Internet links.

<b>CWS Disaster Response Criteria B:</b>	<b>Respond as appropriate to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster and provide services in those cases.</b>
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#### **1.00 Essential Function:**

- New child welfare case investigation process.
- Implementation process for providing new services.

#### **1.01 Process Description/Action Plan**

- If communication exists, ongoing service will remain available by DCFS to receive notification of child abuse, child safety, child abandonment, etc. DCFS Command Post will continue to dispatch necessary staff to effectively respond to the needs of children in distress.
- CSWs will continue to receive specialized training on how to handle investigations in adverse conditions and ensure their personal safety while in the performance of required duties.
- Subsequent to an Event, DCFS' OEM will activate the Departmental Operational Center (DOC) in order to establish communication, gather information and begin the collaboration process on mutual aid assistance in mitigating existing child safety and parental issues.
- DCFS' Children Hotline and Command Post section will continue to operate. If in the event the main Hotline office location is affected, alternative locations have been established and will be activated within minutes to continue the uninterrupted process of receiving emergency calls.

- New child safety Referrals will continue to be generated during a disaster. Command Post Social Workers will continue the performance of their duties in serving the needs of children and caregivers.
- Case documentation will continue with existing tools and when existing tools are not available, workers will resort to manual documentation and storage processes. All confidential material will continue to be handled with established procedures to ensure the privacy of children and caregivers.
- If conventional communication does not exist, alternative communication will be utilized to provide the above services. These communication methods may consist of CWIS radios, couriers, and other methods as may be developed through the collaboration of local, State and federal officials.
- When necessary and if equipment is available, CSWs responding to “Referrals” during a crisis Event will be issued cell phones, laptops with Wi-Fi connectivity for continued communication, uploading and downloading of data to CWS/CMS.

<b>CWS Disaster Response Criteria C:</b>	<b>Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a disaster.</b>
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### **1.00 Essential Function:**

- Communication structure-staff.
- Communication structure-child welfare personnel (phone tree).
- Communication structure –contracted services.
- Communication process when all normal channels are unavailable.
- Communication frequency.
- Communication with media.
- Communication with volunteers.
- Establishment of a toll-free number prior to disaster (include TTY).

### **1.01 Process Description/Action Plan:**

An established procedure requires all child welfare personnel to call established emergency numbers. These numbers have been distributed to all staff and replacement cards are readily available at each office. In the event of a catastrophic condition, staff is instructed to call an appropriate number to receive information on the condition of their work location and information on reporting to regular work location and or alternative location if necessary.

Subsequent to a disaster, emergency officials will dispatch essential child welfare personnel to the affected area (s) – upon request - and each will be equipped with cell phones to ensure continued communication.

DCFS has developed a Confidential Roster that consists of addresses and telephone numbers of all executive management and management critical sections. This telephone tree information will be utilized when necessary to locate and communicate with needed personnel in the event of a disaster.

Each DCFS employee has been issued an emergency information card consisting of established emergency telephone numbers. These numbers are located at each DCFS regional office and DCFS/OEM Headquarters. In the event of a disaster, staff in the effected area(s) is instructed to call the appropriate number to receive specific information and instructions as it relates to work locations and reporting to their normal or alternate work site.

When normal channel/mode of communication is not available, DCFS' Management, OEM and Public Relations will work diligently with available radio, television and other communication entities, to release public services information to DCFS staff, volunteers and the public as a means of on-going communication to distribute necessary and vital information.

Special Communication frequency exists only with the use of CWIS radios. This communication device will be used when conventional communication methods are unavailable to relay emergency information to CSWs responding to field cases in crisis areas. This information will be relayed to emergency respondees (i.e. law enforcement, fire department, and OEM field operation center).

DCFS has an established toll free number to be utilized by the public, law enforcement, and all other mandated reporters. The communication line has TTY capability established.

<b>CWS Disaster Response Criteria D:</b>	<b>Preserve essential program records.</b>
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#### **1.00 Essential Function:**

- Record preservation process.
- Use of off-site back up system.

#### **1.01 Process Description/Action Plan**

All normal and confidential records will continue to be maintained regardless of situations that exist. If and when new records are generated during a crisis event and electric power is available, the normal CWS/CMS electronic archival process will continue in the preservation of vital information. If electric power is not available for a long or short period, records will be generated manually and maintained in "hard copy" format. All "hard copy" information will be housed or stored in a lockable and secure area to preserve the on-going confidentiality of case information.

DCFS' Bureau of Information Services unit has developed and implemented electronic off-site backup services for all of the Department's electronic files. The back up system can be utilized to provide all essential data when needed during an Event.

<b>CWS Disaster Response Criteria E:</b>	<b>Coordinate services and share information with other states.</b>
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## **Narrative:**

The nature and scale of a disaster dictates demands for participation of many different responses from organizations, specialties groups, and other state agencies. Organizations involved in response operations span many professional disciplines – such as emergency management, fire service, law enforcement, emergency medical services, and responders from other government organizations at the local, state, and federal levels. They also frequently include organizations outside of government and from the private sector. Information will be shared among involved organizations to ensure that responders take appropriate steps and protective measures during the response. Integrated safety and information sharing with all organizations can result in benefits for all involved. Information sharing can result in effective decision making for all that rely on having access to the right information at the right time.

The effective sharing of information among organizations during a disaster response operation is critical to its success. While interoperable communications and other technologies are one element of effective information sharing, the most critical elements are the “human bridges” that link response organizations.

Development of the necessary human resources and relationships requires significant training and interactions. Emergency information sharing and data exchange across local, regional, tribal, national and international organizations in the public and private sectors will continue to be processed in a mocked format to ensure effectiveness and quality of services when and during an actual catastrophic condition.

## **1.0 Essential Function:**

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children reporting process

*Adoptions- no response at the time of submission*

### **1.01 Process Descriptions:**

- 1. What will be the on-going process for Placement during a crisis event?*
- 2. Who can suspend Placement services during a crisis event?*
- 3. Define the type of information that would be necessary during a crisis event for Placement purposes.*
- 4. What would be the appropriate DCFS section to distribute the information in a limited communication network during a crisis event?*

## **2.00 Essential Function: Mental health providers**

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**2.01 Process Description:** no response at the time of submission

- 1. What will be the on-going process for MH services during a crisis Event?*
- 2. Who can authorize MH services during a crisis Event?*
- 3. Define the type of MH services that may be necessary during a crisis Event?*
- 4. What would be the appropriate DCFS section to coordinate MH services and information in a limited communication network during a crisis Event?*

## **3.00 Essential Function: Courts**

**3.01 Process Description:** If normal communication is available during a crisis event, DCFS court staff will continue to provide information to the entities listed as follows:

### **General Guidelines / Contacts Superior Court / DCFS Juvenile Court Services**

Maintain contact/coordinate services with the following:

### **OUTSIDE AGENCIES / ENTITIES /OFFICES OFF-SITE**

- **American Red Cross** Local Chapter -San Gabriel Pomona Valley Chapter, 430 Madeline Drive, Pasadena, CA 91105, (626) 799-0841
- **Los Angeles County Disaster Hotline** 1-800-980-4990
- **ICPC (Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children) Unit** (213) 639-4352  
ICPC cases involve wards of the Court from other states under courtesy supervision of LA County and/or cases involving children under LA County supervision placed out of state.
- **Department Emergency Operations Center** (213) 639-1397 - for reporting instructions in the event of a major disaster.

### **IN-HOUSE CONTACTS**

- **Los Angeles County Sheriff Department**, Sergeant Victor Salcido, (323) 526-6040, Building Emergency Coordinator,  
Principal Emergency Coordinator for Edelman Children's Court
- **DCFS - Juvenile Court Services, Building Emergency Coordinator**,  
Jessie Hernandez, Supervising Children's Social Worker, (323) 526-6754
- Edelman Children's Court Representative for Countywide Disaster Services Plan

- ❑ Coordinates Evacuation Plan for Juvenile Court Services DCFS personnel
- ❑ Maintains master list for DCFS staff (accounts for staff present on location)  
**DCFS, Juvenile Court Services, Shelter Care Section,  
 Building Emergency Coordinator.**  
 Don Gridley, Supervising Children's Social Worker, (323) 526-6770
- ❑ Edelman Children's Court Representative for Countywide Disaster Services Plan
- ❑ Coordinates Evacuation Plan for Juvenile Court Services, Shelter Care Section
- ❑ Maintains master list for DCFS Shelter Care staff and children on location

#### **4.00 Essential Function: Federal partners**

##### **4.01 Process Description:**

All necessary services and information sharing during a crisis event will be coordinated by DCFS' Executive office. Designated staff - if needed - will be assigned to communicate the Department's needs for services and all required information will be submitted upon request or as required on an ongoing basis.

#### **5.00 Essential Function: CDSS**

##### **5.01 Process Description:**

All necessary services and information sharing during a crisis event will be coordinated by DCFS' Executive office. Designated staff will be assigned to communicate the Department's needs for services and all required information will be submitted upon request or as required on an ongoing basis.

#### **6.00 Essential Function: Tribes**

##### **6.01 Process Description:**

No response prior to submission of plan

**7.00 Essential Function:** Coordinating services and sharing information to other states during a crisis event will mainly be provided by DCFS staff and not volunteers.

##### **7.01 Process Description:**

The Department's OEM section will conduct emergency Management Services as follows:

- Gather critical data on the Event.
- Assist in distribution of information regarding the Event.

- Receive and process critical information on the physical condition of Department's facilities.
- Receiving and processing information on services being provided by responders.
- Assist in identifying and analyzing problems and complaints and recommend the type of services necessary to mitigate the issue(s).

DCFS' Emergency Response Section will continue to respond to "Referrals" generated as a result of emergency calls to the Children Emergency Hotline.

Services to the public and information sharing will be coordinated by ER supervisors and appropriate ER managers.

The administrative section of the Command Post Hotline will coordinate and control all information necessary to be shared with other agencies.